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ARMAMENTS AND CASTE

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I believe it is not getting too far away from our subject, if I make no attempt to deal with the concrete results which may be expected to follow upon a policy of military expansion. I am more concerned with the spirit which the agitation for large armaments has brought into being, and which armaments in turn are likely to foster. Our institutions are bound to be shaped by the national state of mind; and more than that, they are bound to take meaning from the national state of mind. Externally, Germany of today has many of the political and social arrangements towards which we have been struggling in the name of greater democracy. It is still a guess what militarism will do to the Constitution, to Congress, to our federal and local machinery, to progressive legislation, to industrial reform, to child labor, to woman suffrage, to the entire creed of social righteousness and justice which absorbed us for many years, until a Presidential year came around and it was suddenly discovered that the higher justice and righteousness have their home in Servia and Belgium, and not in Alabama and Pennsylvania. About concrete changes we must still speculate. But what is already manifesting itself is the soul which armaments engender.

About this spirit of preparedness, I do not want to dogmatize. What I wish to convey is only a general impression, arising from a mass of impressions as they have come to me in the course of my daily work in a newspaper office. These impressions are based as much on the trivial features of the preparedness campaign as on its important features. My impressions are drawn from what the advocates of armaments have said formally from the platform and over their signatures in the press, from what they have said casually to reporters, and from what they have left unsaid. For an appraisal of the spirit of armament, it seems to me that the proceedings in Congress are hardly more significant than the proceedings of the latest woman's auxiliary for creating a large reserve of bandages and formaldehyde for our wounded soldiers.

It is my belief that the differences of opinion, which undoubtedly exist in this country both as to the necessity and meaning of large armaments, are to be explained principally by a difference of class-feeling. In many of the arguments for thorough preparedness and in the state of mind which these arguments reveal, I detect an attitude and an outlook which among the older nations would be described as a manifestation of the spirit of caste. I am aware that other reasons have been advanced for the prevailing division of sentiment. One explanation is geographical. The distinction has been drawn between public opinion on the two seaboard and public opinion in the interior of the country. The difference certainly exists. It is usually accounted for by saying that the people of the Middle West either do not realize the serious position of this country in the face of international developments, or that they selfishly refuse to bear the trouble and expense involved in a great system of national defense. Secure behind the Alleghenies and the Sierras, the people of the interior either cannot visualize the menace that confronts the people of the two coasts, or refuse to recognize their obligations to the general welfare. Whether the fault be a lack of patriotism or a lack of intelligence, localism is supposed to be one of the principal reasons why the people of Kansas and Iowa do not think like the people of New York and Boston.

The second explanation is one that is more often implied than expressed in the usual plea for armaments. The sentiment is widespread that indifference or outright opposition to national defense arises from a general weakening of national sentiment and that this is due to the presence among us of a large population of foreign birth or of foreign descent. It is true that responsible political leaders, in discussing Americanism, have been careful to make the point that Americanism is not a question of birth or origin; Mr. Roosevelt has asserted repeatedly that hyphenism is psychological and not ethnographic. Yet in everyday conversation, in much that has been written and said about Americanism, there runs this undercurrent of conviction, that if today we are not as resolutely national as we once were, it is because of the heavy dilution of our citizenship by immigration. How else shall we explain the widespread concern about facilitating the process of naturalization among our aliens? It is not a logical state of mind. The only element that has fallen under suspicion is the German element.

It seems rather absurd, every time we suspect a German-American, to go out and naturalize an Italian, a Slav, a Russian Jew, or an Armenian, who by no stretch of the imagination can be conceived as siding with their native country against our own, even if the international situation admitted of such a divided allegiance. The reason, rather, is what I have indicated it to be. It is simply the general feeling that if we were more purely native today, we would be more emphatically American.

Neither explanation, the parochialism of the Middle West and South, or the influence of the foreign element in our population, will adequately account for the existing opposition to a policy of large armaments. This will appear if we look a little more carefully into the variations of popular opinion, both in those sections where the preparedness sentiment is weakest and where it is strongest. If Kansas and Iowa were indifferent because they feel secure from invasion, the feeling ought to prevail among all sections of the population. Whether you are a banker in Des Moines or a street-car conductor in Des Moines or a farmer in the interior, you would be equally secure against an invading army from Germany or Japan. Actually there is a notable difference in sentiment, and it is determined by class conditions. Trained newspaper observers who followed in the path of President Wilson to study the effect of his missionary journey to the West, found this to be the fact. When they canvassed preparedness sentiment in Des Moines, they found that the bankers and big business men were in favor of armament and that the working population was against it. The big army sentiment was strong in the clubs, and weak in the cheap restaurants. For the country as a whole there is sufficient evidence that the labor unions and the farmers are opposed to militarist expansion. Debates on the subject in the labor federations have shown an overwhelming sentiment for our traditional policies. Two million farmers, through their grange representatives at Washington, have gone on record against preparedness in the hearings before the Congressional committees. We have the lesson of the Michigan and Nebraska primaries. And there is significance in the attitude of the Socialist party with its record of nearly a million votes in the last Presidential election. That party has nominated an anti-armament man for the presidency and is conducting its campaign on the issue.

So much for the West. If we turn to that part of the country where the sentiment for militarist expansion is strongest, we find the same subdivision of opinion based on class. I speak of New York because I am best acquainted with conditions there, but what I say of New York is true of Boston, and I imagine of all large cities on the Atlantic coast as far south as Baltimore.

If two years ago we had approached this problem *a priori*; if we had said, "Suppose a wave of Americanism sweeps over the country, expressing itself in no matter what form, where will this new patriotism manifest itself most strongly?" how many people would have prophesied New York? Recall New York's traditional reputation. It lies almost outside of the United States geographically and quite outside of the United States spiritually. It is the city of the Gay White Way, the tango palaces and the un-American Sunday. It is the city where fortunes made outside of New York, in America, are spent, and where ideals made outside of New York, in America, are rejected and frustrated. It is the home of that foreign incubus on American life—Wall Street. It is the city, and New York is the state, where the great social and political movements that have stirred American life during the last decade have elicited the least response. Recall what the historians have written of the West as the dynamic center of the national life and of the East, with New York as its capital, as the dead mass upon which the western ferment must work. And then consider the situation we face today of New York as the citadel of the New Americanism which is measured by armament!

Put aside this traditional vaudeville interpretation of New York which I have just outlined. There yet remains a solid body of fact why we should expect a reawakened nationalism not to show itself at its strongest in New York City. In 1910 the foreign born population of the United States was 14 per cent of the entire population; in New York State it was 30 per cent, or more than twice as great. In 1910 the native population of foreign or mixed parentage in the United States was 21 per cent. In New York State it was 33 per cent. If we were still reasoning *a priori*, what showing in the matter of Americanism could we predict for New York State, with only 37 per cent of its people of native parentage as against Kansas with 72 per cent? Or for Massachusetts with only 30 per cent of its people of native parentage as against Iowa with 58 per cent?

Two years ago, looking forward into the future, we should have said that if a President of the United States found it necessary to undertake a missionary journey in behalf of Americanism, he would set out for foreign New York amid the frenzied cheers of the people of Kansas City, and he would proceed to the redemption of foreign Boston at the behest of the excited population of Topeka.

But while New York, as a whole, is in favor of army increase, there are gradations of sentiment. Of our press, for example, the *World*, the largest in circulation among morning newspapers, is moderately in favor of increased armaments, the *Sun* is emphatically in favor, the *Times* and the *Herald* are feverishly in favor; the *Tribune* is deliriously in favor. The Hearst papers are imperialist when it is a question of Mexico or Japan, but are strangely pacifist when it is a question of Europe.

Thus, while New York as a whole is favorable towards armaments, the emphasis varies with class considerations. The tone of the individual newspapers is plain evidence. Recall that the Hearst newspapers in New York, as in every city where they are established, appeal to our lowest social stratum when measured by the income-tax scale. It is therefore significant that the Hearst papers should be cooler towards armaments as a reflex of European conditions, than any other New York newspaper. Go up one step further and we find that the Pulitzer papers, and especially the *Morning World*, appeals predominantly to the small business man, to the retail shop-keeper, the more prosperous of the skilled worker, and the moderately prosperous suburban class. And the *World* is more outspoken for armaments than the Hearst papers. But the *World* shows moderation, and that I attribute to the fact I have just mentioned that its public is among the smaller business men and the moderately prosperous sections of the community. It is only when you reach the solid business class and beyond that, the realm of big business and established social position—when you reach the public covered by the *Times*, by the *Sun*, by the *Herald* and the *Tribune*, that you find the militaristic agitation in its most violent form. I believe it is plain that whether in Kansas or in New York, whether sentiment is predominantly against armaments or in favor, class lines cut across the prevailing drift of opinion.

In speaking of big armaments as an upper-class policy, I am not using "class" quite in the dignified sense of an economic group

in the community. I am thinking of class rather as the word is used in the society columns. When the Socialists speak of preparedness as a class issue, they will tell you that it is a movement fostered by the capitalist class with a view to war profits and foreign trade exploitation. And if we find it difficult to understand why New York State with a native population of native origin of 37 per cent and Massachusetts with a like population of only 30 per cent should be hotter for national defense than Kansas or Iowa, the Socialist will say that New York and Massachusetts pay 48 per cent of the income tax for the whole country, while Kansas and Iowa together pay $\frac{9}{10}$ of one per cent. And of course there are a great many people who are not Socialists, who do not speak of the "capitalist" class as the fomenters of militarism, but who nevertheless do speak of special classes, the munition makers, the armor manufacturers and the shipbuilders.

But what I have in mind is not only the influence of the wealthy munition maker, but the influence of his son at the university and his wife in society. I am not thinking merely of the well-to-do classes as consciously favoring war for the sake of profits, but as favoring the growth of military establishments out of that spirit of caste which among all aristocracies the world over finds in the business of fighting the most congenial of occupations.

Armament is fashionable. I must confess that I am not greatly impressed by the zest with which "society" has gone in for national defense. This business of establishing hospital depots, organizing ambulance units, drilling high-school girls in uniform with rifle, strikes me as akin to the zeal with which one goes in for flower shows and barefoot dancing or whatever may be the fashionable pre-occupation of the moment. Lenten amusements nowadays have a way of attaching themselves to a great social purpose. In some measure we are confronted today with the same spirit which, at the beginning of the war in Europe, let loose a deluge of duchesses upon British headquarters in Flanders.

But beyond such comparatively harmless excursions into new realms of sensation, I think there is to be found among our well-to-do classes a real approximation to the spirit of *noblesse oblige*. I find a sense of anxious responsibility, of that call to duty, which across the water is every little while addressed to the "Gentlemen of England." There is a very distinct appeal now being addressed

to the "Gentlemen of America." Our prosperous citizenship has hitherto refused to render service to the community, by doing its share for the political life of the country. Men of wealth have preferred to work upon congressmen and legislatures instead of working in Congress and the legislatures; and their sons have preferred polo and speed boats. But military service has its own glamour. I cannot help thinking that a great many young men of wealth, who hitherto have seen no field open to them in the service of the nation, now think they have such an opportunity opening up for them. The army and the navy as a high-class occupation for the rich unemployed is a factor which enters into the movement toward a heightened military policy.

This growing sense of responsibility has been affected by the wild talk about our declining sense of patriotism, to which I have referred. Continuous insistence on the perils of hyphenism has undoubtedly created the apprehension that a divided allegiance is threatening the honor and safety of these United States. From its specific application to German sympathizers the reproach has been widened so as to include the whole mass of foreign born and the descendants of the foreign born. The melting pot has proven a ghastly failure, and the feeling is widespread that if we are ever plunged into difficulties with other nations, such as we have encountered with Germany, we must expect the same disloyalty.

Once that distrust of the great masses of our people becomes widespread, you can see how it would call forth a reassertion of Americanism among the people of the old stock. And that sentiment would be strongest precisely where the foreign element is most numerous. To the extent that in New York or Boston the old native element is threatened with engulfment it would tend to become self-conscious and class-conscious. The natural sense of social exclusiveness of the well-to-do is heightened by the consciousness that they are a saving remnant for true Americanism. Amidst a hyphenated population it is incumbent upon Americans of ancient origin to assert their fidelity to America, as a protest against the disloyal and as an example to the wavering or the ignorant. And the most concrete way in which this demonstration can be made is through a wholehearted acceptance of militarism, both as a patriotic service in itself and as a school for patriotism.

It is in this sense that I have been speaking of the present

movement for preparedness as appreciably a caste movement, actuated by a certain spirit of aloofness from the mass of indifferent citizenship. It is in this sense that I believe the creation of a large military and naval establishment will react in turn upon caste spirit. If our traditional policy were to be changed under the stress of a universal demand from the citizenship of the country, if the United States went in for militarism on the German scale, and navalism on the British scale, to the abandonment of traditions as old as the republic, there would yet be some compensation, if that change were the will of the *whole* people. From a nation in peace and industry we would become a nation in arms, but, after all, France after 1789 was a nation in arms and remained democratic. But if the militarisation of the United States should be brought about by the economically and socially superior classes exercising an influence beyond their numerical strength, militarism would come to us as a class policy. Among our farmers and workers the feeling would arise that the policy of armament has been forced upon the country by the moneyed classes for their own interests, whether financial or social. Among the rich in turn the feeling would maintain itself that this country has been saved *in spite* of a large part of the nation, and that the future welfare of the country must depend upon the patriotic and enlightened devotion of a small class in the face of a great mass of ignorant, or imperfect, or disloyal Americanism. That, I believe, is caste.

You may proceed to pile up institutions which in form are democracy; but if the ruling spirit of the nation is what I have outlined it, you will have only a Tory democracy. The voice of the Tory is making itself heard. You hear it in Mr. George W. Perkins' desire for the presence of a commander-in-chief in the White House. You hear it in the demand for a General Naval Staff independent of civilian control. You hear it in a remarkable editorial published only the other day in one of our New York papers, from which I wish to read a few sentences. The article is called "The Warning," and has for its text the insurrection in Ireland. Our writer says:

The incidents which have taken place in Dublin may be repeated in Chicago, in Milwaukee, in New York City, at any moment. They may occur because with precisely the same warning that the British government has had the American has neglected, dodged, skulked away from the obvious duty and the unmistak-

able facts. . . . We have lived in this country of ours amidst disorder, violence, outrage, organized from without. . . . There never has been a time when the American peril could not have been disposed of had our rulers dared, had they possessed the courage, the will, the strength to face the situation. . . . The whole world is filled with terrible lessons that are being taught to the selfish, the cowardly, the blind. . . . This is the price Britain is paying for the Asquiths and the Greys and all the rest of the "wait and see"—Gallipoli, Mons, Mesopotamia. . . . We have treason and anarchy here. Unless they be dealt with now we shall have insurrection and machine guns hereafter.

I will not enter into a detailed analysis of this argument. I will not attempt to examine how close the parallel is between 21 months of the German American question in America and five hundred years of the Irish question. I need not dwell on the fact that of the three horrid mistakes of the "wait and see" policy—Mons, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia—Gallipoli was the work of a strong young man named Winston Churchill who had the courage, the will and the strength to send off 100,000 men to die at Gallipoli on his own hook, and Mesopotamia was the work of another strong man named General Nixon who, as stated in the House of Commons, set out for Bagdad on his own initiative. But what I do wish you to see is that in the writer of the article I have quoted we have produced a very fair example of the Tory mind and the Tory outlook. The civil process of the courts by which German plotters have been seized and sent to prison is not enough for this Junker of Park Row. What we need is the mailed fist, Bethlehem mailed or Krupp mailed does not matter. When you think of several hundred casualties in the streets of Dublin as the result of weak-kneed sentimentalism and compare it with the splendid state of peace and contentment which 500 years of the other sort of thing have produced in Ireland, can you blame this writer for lashing out at the folly and cowardice of the "wait and see" crowd? And if you gave this young man a nice, large army, can you see what he would do with it?

Two thousand miles from Park Row, the spirit of Tory democracy breaks out in a softer, more poetic strain; but the spirit is there. Mr. William Allen White, somewhat uneasy at an alliance that he foresees between Mr. Roosevelt and the "plutes" of Wall Street, as Mr. White calls them, on a militarist platform, finds comfort in the thought that Mr. Roosevelt, while working with the "plutes" will yet compel them to pay "tribute." This tribute, says Mr. White,

will be paid in larger wages for men, for unemployment insurance, for abolition of child-labor, for shorter hours of women in industry, for workingmen's compensation, for old-age pensions, and state insurance. This means that the rich will have to divide.

But which of these things has the Kaiser failed to provide for his people? And how does this social programme differ from the Junker state philosophy of a well-fed, safe-guarded, simple-hearted and simple-minded people contentedly taking orders from a small ruling class which alone has the intelligence to realize national destiny and the vigor to shape it? There is no perceptible difference between the ideal state of William of Potsdam and the ideal state of William of Emporia. The rich will indeed be glad to divide; for the masses of the people there will be comfort and safety under the form of democratic institutions; for the rich, the power to shape the policies of the nation and to apply the democratic machinery to the uses of imperialism. That vision of social justice which only a few years ago was to be attained through the efforts of a democracy inspired by an ideal and conscious of its power, is to be realized. But it is to come not as the prize of a triumphant democracy but as a profit-sharing bonus declared by the "plutes."